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"WYOMING'S HOUSE PLANNING WORKSHOPS"

(Excerpt from a letter written by Mrs. Margaret H. Tuller
home management specialist, Wyoming, dated May 21, 1945.)

"Our workshops are planned for men and women with a minimum of 5 families and a maximum of 10 families attending one workshop. We meet with each group for 2 successive days and after approximately a month's time go back for an all-day follow-up meeting. The members of the workshop have been notified prior to the meeting to gather together the plans they have been collecting for some time and to measure the width and length of each piece of furniture which will be going into the new house. They bring large sheets of white paper, any bits of colored paper they have, pencils, and rulers.

"We begin the work by having each family check the blank sheet indicating certain preferences as well as the set-up of the family. (A copy of the check sheet can be procured from Mrs. Tuller.) I based the items on the Oregon study on rural housing. I believe that a check sheet similar to this is rather necessary to get the families to think about what they want the house to do for them. After the sheets are checked, we go through the items discussing the preferences of the group. They are always interested in having their own preferences compared with those which were given by the Oregon homemakers.

"Following the discussion of the check sheet, we discuss the minimum standards for rural housing. I briefed the Federal bulletin because I thought that it might be a bit more usable in the brief form. (procure this from Mrs. Tuller.) Always we have the comments that Montana houses are far above the minimum requirements given in this leaflet. That is my cue for handing out the housing statistics for the country as a whole and for Montana, which statistics are derived from the 1940 census report. You can see from the compilation of these figures that Montana does not show up well even with the national average. I usually have time to read two or three short articles on trends in postwar housing. I have found some good ones in the Journal of Home Economics, and there is a very interesting one in a recent Consumers' Guide. By that time it is noon of the first day.

"We spend the afternoon of the first day discussing what the group has felt should be the pivotal point in house planning- the kitchen. In almost every case the women had put down on their preference check sheet a rather large kitchen. When we have finished our discussion at the end of the first day, they are thinking in terms of a kitchen and a utility room, with the kitchen narrow enough to cut down the immense amount of walking that they have previously done. They are also thinking of the unbroken "U" providing for the flow of work from right to left for the right-handed person. They have learned how to determine proper heights for the homemaker who uses the kitchen most. They know about compactness and accessibility in storage of utensils, dishes, etc., in the kitchen. It is very interesting to see how much we have been able to make believers of these men and women in an efficient workshop for the preparation of food and the other jobs that it entails.
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"The second morning we spend on storage, reviewing briefly the kitchen storage that was handled the afternoon before and going on to storage units in other parts of the house. The afternoon of the second day is the most interesting one. We discuss together what the living room should provide for the family when the family is alone and what part it has to play when the family has guests. There follows then a discussion of all of the various phases of furniture arrangements which we have previously included in our demonstration on The Living Room and The Family, (Mimeographed circular by that title can be obtained from Mrs. Tuller.) Following this discussion, the members of the workshop are asked to draw to the scale of $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to the foot a plan for the living room which they had indicated in their preference sheet. They do not put in windows and doors at this time. Using the same scale, they draw the various pieces of furniture on colored paper and cut them out. Now comes the arranging of furniture to provide for all of the needs of the living room which they had jotted down throughout the discussion. The fireplace is put in where it will serve best; windows are placed where they will provide light for the proper units, the doors are so placed that they will not make a diagonal hallway of the living room, etc. If someone has been considering a stock plan, that person draws the living room of the stock plan to scale and arranges furniture as I have indicated for the purely original plans. It is surprising what bad features they were able to discover in some of the stock plans. In fact, one woman in one of our workshops tore up her stock plan when she had tested living in the house with our system of furniture arrangement. After each living room has been arranged, we have a discussion of such things as a balance of masses, convenience of placement of units, open passageways, etc. We criticize each person as to its livability.

"There is still time in the afternoon to do a similar thing with the bedroom. I believe many people have not considered before how important it is to provide certain features in the bedroom. For example, (1) space for the bed, straight with the lines of the room, and yet out 2 feet from the wall in order to make bedmaking an easier job as well as to save floors; (2) cross ventilation without drafts on the sleeper; (3) a convenient placement close together of the chest of drawers and the closet with provision for a chair to hold clothes that may be removed from either the chest of drawers or the closet; and (4) good light on the face of the person standing or sitting in front of the mirror of the dressing table or dresser. Of course, some women want their own writing desks in their bedrooms, some want their sewing machine and the supplies and equipment that would be used with the machine, some want an easy chair with a table lamp or floor lamp for reading. All these things they provide for in the placement of the furniture in the bedroom on paper. By that time they are very much interested in going on with the drawing of the different rooms of the house. We give them a month between that day and the time we shall come again.

"The follow-up meeting consists of a study of the plans that have been drawn by the families in the time between the initial meetings and the follow-up meeting. Sometimes these plans are just individual rooms and in some cases the families have tried to put them together to make a coordinated floor plan. A discussion of building materials including the use of some native materials and a discussion of financing the home follow. We have found that it takes a good deal of time for each person to tell what he has done since the last meeting, so there is not much more that we can get into that follow-up day than what I have indicated. We let the group know that this is only the beginning. We expect to meet ~~with them three or four~~ times next year and each successive year until their houses are built. We hope to have an architect and a rural electrification man (probably in one package) assisting us next year.

"I have been using Pickering's Shelter for Living as a reference book. In each county where we have had this work I have asked the home demonstration agent to buy an office copy of this book and to lend it to her families who are doing postwar house planning work. In almost every case, the families have been able to keep the book 2 weeks before it must be sent on to the next. We have found also that this book provides various measurements which are sometimes in question when we are drawing floor plans in a meeting.

"This year we have conducted workshops in six counties. We expect that number to be greatly increased next year. As you probably surmised we work with the people who are planning to build new houses in one group and those who are planning to remodel present structures in another group. I have not written any bulletins to be given out to the people at these meetings. I have carried with me, however, a wealth of reference material from my files as well as a great many pictures showing good and bad kitchen arrangements, storage suggestions, etc. I believe you will agree with me that the members of the workshops are interested when I tell you that the same ones come back for each of the 3 days.

"I shall be very happy to hear from you as to your method of conducting this work. I believe it is going to be our major challenge during the next few years."

